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SPORTS

After being bounced in an Elite 8 D-1 classic matchup, WHS volleyball ready to reload to remain among the state's best

JOE MCCONNELL | SPORTS EDITOR

November 15, 2025 . 10:04 AM — 3 min read

Winchester High senior volleyball captain Johanna Melhorn is prepared to slam the ball over the net during a match last month. Melhorn has since made the All-Middlesex League team, along with junior teammate Hazel Lovins. COURTESY PHOTO/CARINE MELHORN

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The Winchester High volleyball team won 21 matches this year, counting the postseason, while losing just twice, a record that should never be dismissed casually.

For their efforts, they were seeded seventh in the final Division 1 power rankings. But that last loss will always be defined as bitter, which is unfortunate, because only one team in each division can win a state championship. Most of the time it comes down to a fortuitous bounce of a ball.

The Red & Black made it all the way to the Elite 8 after dominating 3-0 wins over North Andover and Needham in the first two rounds. They then had to go up against second-seeded Newton North (22-2), a team that defeated them during the regular season, 3-1. Unfortunately, history repeated itself all the way down to the exact same score.

The Tigers have since shutout Central Catholic in the state semifinals, the sixth seed, 3-0, to move on to the title matchup against Franklin, the fifth seed, on Saturday night (Nov. 15) at 8 p.m. in Billerica.

Winchester coach John Fleming is still naturally disappointed coming up just short of his team's ultimate goal, but he will never complain about the effort.

"It was really a tough way for our season to end, but I thought the girls played tough and fought tooth and nail until the last point," Fleming said. "As a team, we had a tremendous season, and have nothing (to be ashamed of). All of the girls should be incredibly proud of the season that they had. It's disappointing that this match was played in the third round, which meant that it was (at Newton North) and not a neutral site, because I think we are the two best teams in the state. It should have been at least a state semifinal matchup. That being said, we knew that at some point

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have had to beat Newton North, if we wanted to win the state championship."

Winchester High junior volleyball player Hazel Lovins (16) gets ready to complete the serve during a match last month. Lovins has since made the All-Middlesex League team, along with senior captain Johanna Melhorn. Lovins is also this year's league MVP. COURTESY PHOTO/CARINE MELHORN

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Newton North won each of the first two sets by two points. "It would have been nice to finish off the first or second set," said Fleming. "We had our chances to do so, but just couldn't take advantage of them."

The veteran Winchester coach went on to say: "Overall, we once again had a great season as Middlesex League champions, while losing just twice to the same (non-league) team (Newton North). We have so much to be proud of like having several players being recognized individually as league all-stars. (Senior captain) Johanna (Melhorn) and (junior) Hazel (Lovins), in particular, were named to the All-League and Division 1 All-State teams. Hazel was also chosen league MVP."

Freshman Kaiyal Kumaran, a libero, and juniors Maddie Crooks, an outside hitter, and Defne Mergen, a setter, made the league all-star team for the second time. Melhorn, a middle hitter, is also a repeat all-star, and her ascension to the All-League squad meant that she is among the top six players in the league this year."

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Fleming will definitely miss his four seniors – Juilia Campo, Nora Harstad, Gwen Gaiko and Melhorn – who "brought a lot of skill and leadership to the program over the last four years," he said, while adding, "they will be feted, along with the rest of the team at our end of the year banquet on Sunday (Nov. 16)."

But Fleming also has a solid group of 12 returning next fall, including six starters, and among the returnees are second middle hitter Viviana Cella, Karen Huai, Izzy Bormann, Kumaran, Crooks, Lovins and Mergen.

"These returning players will have some big shoes to fill to replac graduating seniors, but they are all eager and are ready to work h

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offseason to make another deep run in the state tournament next (fall)," said Fleming.

Considering the program's recent past, who's going to deny Winchester from being one of the top Division 1 teams once again in the state next year. They certainly have history to back them up.

Joe McConnell is a longtime, award-winning sports editor for numerous North Shore publications. He began covering Winchester sports for the News last November.

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Sweet 16 game after beating Lexington in postseason opener

It was the third meeting this year between Middlesex League boys basketball rivals Lexington (16-5, 11th seed) and Winchester (17-4, 22nd seed). They split the first two during the regular season, thus making this Round of 32 postseason matchup the impromptu rubber game of this year's series, with the

JOE MCCONNELL | SPORTS EDITOR
March 3, 2026

senior captains move on to All-States

After the Winchester High qualified wrestlers competed hard over two days last weekend (Feb. 20, 21) in the State Division 1 Meet at North Andover High School, Mother Nature gave them a break to rest and recuperate with Monday's blizzard that resulted in two days off from school. There

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February 28, 2026

SPORTS

Winchester boys hockey advances to the Sweet 16 after beating Wachusett in the tournament opener

The Winchester High boys hockey team (12-9-2), the 17th seed, edged the 16th-seeded Wachusett Regional Mountaineers (18-2-1), 5-4 in a Round of 32 Division 1 state tournament game at Westborough's Northstar Ice Arena on Feb. 25. The Red & Black will now take on top seed Catholic Memorial (18-2-1)

JOE MCCONNELL | SPORTS EDITOR
February 27, 2026

SPORTS

With postseason starting Friday night, WHS boys hoop seniors English, Sarpong, Burbine join Middlesex League elite

The Winchester High boys basketball team, the 22nd seed, will take on Middlesex League rival Lexington, the 11th seed, to begin the Division 1 state tournament in the Round of 32 on Friday night, Feb. 27, starting at 6 p.m. These teams are so evenly matched, beginning with the

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FEATURES

'Chicago: Teen Edition' dances onto the Winchester High School stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents "Chicago: Teen Edition," a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. Set in the 1920s, this iconic production is sure to leave the audience wanting more. Performances will

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

March 4, 2026

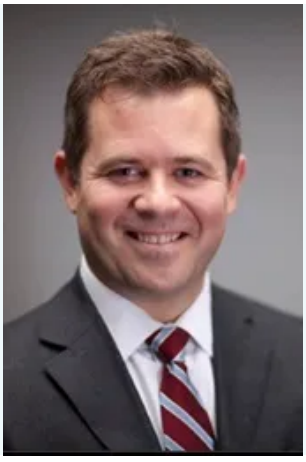
RIPLEY PRESENTS
SYLDASON: YOU ARE WELCOME HERE
MARCH 13, 2026
7:30 PM
Sylvie Zakarian, marimba and Daniela Tosic, voice
Featuring folk and classical works by Gomidas,
Hovhaness, Minkin, Radan, Tantchev, and Tassone.
fcc-winchester.com/ripleychapel

EVENTS

Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents 'Syldason: You Are Welcome Here'

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

March 4, 2026



NEWS

Rep. Michael Day helps House colleagues pass sweeping energy

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Winchester gun own training rules starting April 2

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affordability bill

The following was submitted by the Office of Rep. Michael S. Day: Rep. Michael S. Day and his colleagues in the House of Representatives recently passed energy affordability legislation that would result in over $9 billion in savings for utility ratepayers over the next 10 years. The bill maintains critical

March 4, 2026

Public safety data How Winchester compares on firearms licenses in comparable Massachusetts communities Active licenses as of Jan. 25, 2025 — Source: Massachusetts Criminal History Systems Board License to carry firearms Firearms identification card Winchester and Marblehead are the focus communities. Peers selected based on comparable population size, demographics and suburban

WILL DOWD | STAFF WRITER

March 4, 2026

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